

RHOPTROMYRMEX OPACUS, new synonymy of, and
brief characterization

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COLLECTION

Rhoptryrmex opacus Emery, in Forel, 1909, Ann. Soc. ent. Belg., 53: 59, nota, worker. Type locality "Kamerun". Types in Museo Civico di Storia Naturale, Genoa (and elsewhere), examined 1963.

Rhoptryrmex opacus var. *esta* Forel, 1909, Ann. Soc. ent. Belg., 53: 59, worker, female, male. Type locality "Bas Congo." Types in Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Geneva (and elsewhere), examined 1963. New synonymy.

Rhoptryrmex opacus var. *laeviceps* Santschi, 1916, Ann. Soc. ent. Fr., 84: 504, worker. Type locality Boma, Congo. Type in Naturhistorisches Museum, Basel, examined 1963. New synonymy.

Rhoptryrmex opacus subsp. *monodi* Bernard, 1952, Mem. Inst. fr. Afr. noire, 19 (1): 251, fig. 14F, worker. Type locality Ziéla, Mt. Nimba area, Guinea. Location of unique type unknown, but was to have been deposited in Muséum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris; possibly still in the possession of Prof. Bernard. Not seen. Provisional new synonymy.

Worker with predominantly fine, opaque reticulate-punctulate sculpture over head and alitrunk; in some smaller specimens, the cephalic sculpture may be more shallow and more nearly shining. Metanotal groove present, moderately to deeply impressed. Petiolar node moderate in height, with broadly rounded summit; postpetiole subglobular, slightly wider than petiolar node and wider than long, its ventral surface without a prominent rounded process or tumulus. Color dull yellow to brownish-orange; according to Bernard, the type of subsp. *monodi* has the occiput and alitrunk blackish-brown.

Female microgynous, no larger than the largest worker and smaller than the male, slender. Mandibles tending towards a falcate form; masticatory margins curved, oblique, leaving a large interspace; apical two teeth large and sharp, others are only small denticles. Propodeum evenly and gently convex in profile, without any trace of teeth. Petiole somewhat compressed, with a convex keel beneath; postpetiole with a prominent, rounded anteroventral process. Head with spaced rugae making a mainly longitudinal pattern. Rest of body predominantly smooth, shining; gaster with small but conspicuous punctures from which arise fairly long, mostly reclinate hairs. Color dark brown.

Male a little larger than the largest workers. Mandibles more or less like those of female, opposable; antennae with 9 segments, but former segmentation of long fusion segment is visible in some specimens. Petiole clavate, its node not very distinctly set off. Head above with sculpture much as in worker, sculpture otherwise predominantly smooth and shining. Gaster larger than in female, with prominent genitalia. Color as in female.

Distribution: Central and West Africa in higher-rainfall areas; sporadic. Records for samples in the Museum of Comparative Zoology and the California Academy of Science as follows: Thysville, Congo (J. C. Bequaert). 50 km s. of Tahaia, Congo, and km 94 on Kavumu-Walikale Route, 900 m, Congo (E. S. Ross and R. E. Leech).

Biology: According to the collector, the Thysville sample came from a populous nest in sandy soil in savanna.

Synonymy: The types of var. *esta* are unremarkable specimens of *opacus*; the *laeviceps* type is just a small individual with allometrically shallow head sculpture. The figures of subsp. *monodi* in the original description, especially that of the propodeum (fig. 14F), is particularly puzzling, especially since that purporting to be *R. opacus* on the same page (fig. 14E) bears no resemblance to the propodeum of workers of that species in my experience. I am accepting Bernard's opinion that the form belongs to *opacus*. It appears to be a dark variant.

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